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World's population is projected to nearly stop growing by the end of the century

BY ANTHONY CILLUFFO AND NEIL G. RUIZ

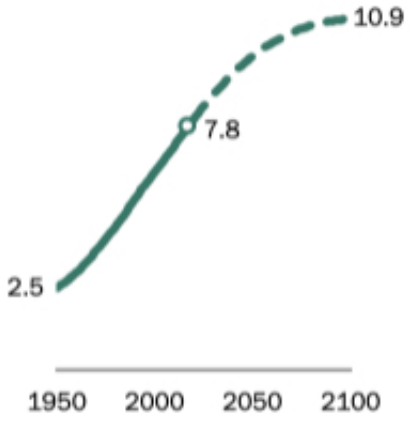
For the first time in modern history, the world's population is expected to virtually stop growing by the end of this century, due in large part to falling global fertility rates, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of new data from the United Nations.

By 2100, the world's population is projected to reach approximately 10.9 billion, with annual growth of less than 0.1% – a steep decline from the current rate. Between 1950 and today, the world's population grew between 1% and 2% each year, with the number of people rising from 2.5 billion to more than 7.7 billion.

Here are 11 key takeaways from the UN's "World Population Prospects 2019":

World population growth is projected to flatten in coming decades

World population, in billions



Note: Data labels shown for 1950, 2020 and 2100.
Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2019."

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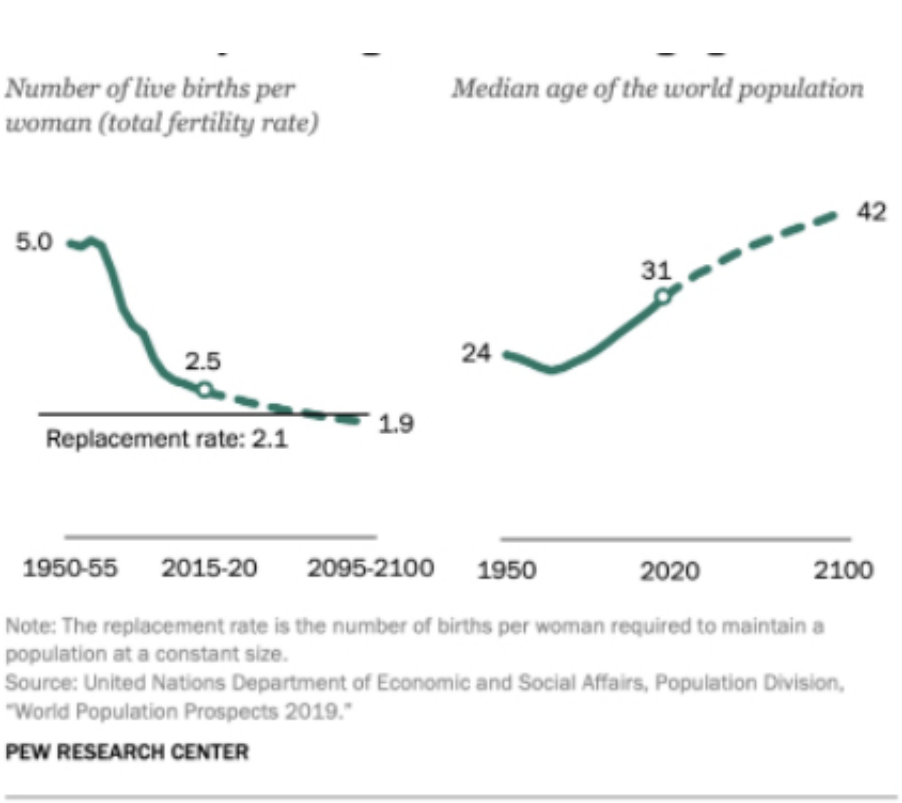
1 The global fertility rate is expected to be 1.9 births per woman by 2100, down from 2.5 today. The rate is projected to fall below the replacement fertility rate (2.1 births per woman) by 2070. The replacement fertility rate is the number of births per woman needed to maintain a population's size.

2 The world's median age is

Global fertility is falling as the world is aging

expected to increase to 42 in 2100, up from the current 31 – and from 24 in 1950. Between 2020 and 2100, the number of people ages 80 and older is expected to increase from 146 million to 881 million. Starting in 2073, there are projected to be more people ages 65 and older than under age 15 – the first time this will be the case. Contributing factors to the rise in the median age are the increase in life expectancy and falling fertility rates.



Note: The replacement rate is the number of births per woman required to maintain a population at a constant size.
Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2019."

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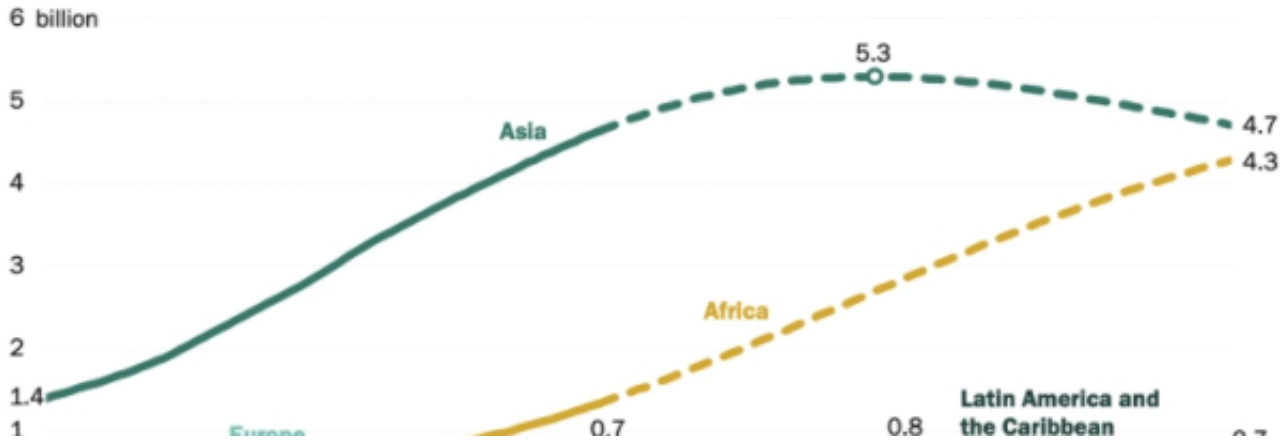
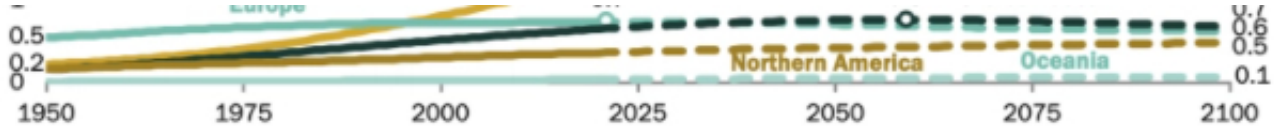
3 Africa is the only world region projected to have strong population growth for the rest of this century. Between 2020 and 2100, Africa's population is expected to increase from 1.3 billion to 4.3 billion. Projections show these gains will come mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, which is expected to more than triple in population by 2100. The regions that include the United States and Canada (Northern America) and Australia and New Zealand (Oceania) are projected to grow throughout the rest of the century, too, but at slower rates than Africa. (This analysis uses regional classifications from the UN and may differ from other Pew Research Center reports.)

Population growth in Africa is projected to remain strong throughout this century

Population by region, in billions





Note: Data labels show projected peak population for each region: Europe (2021), Asia (2055) and Latin America and the Caribbean (2058). Regions follow United Nations definitions and may differ from other Pew Research Center reports.
Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2019."

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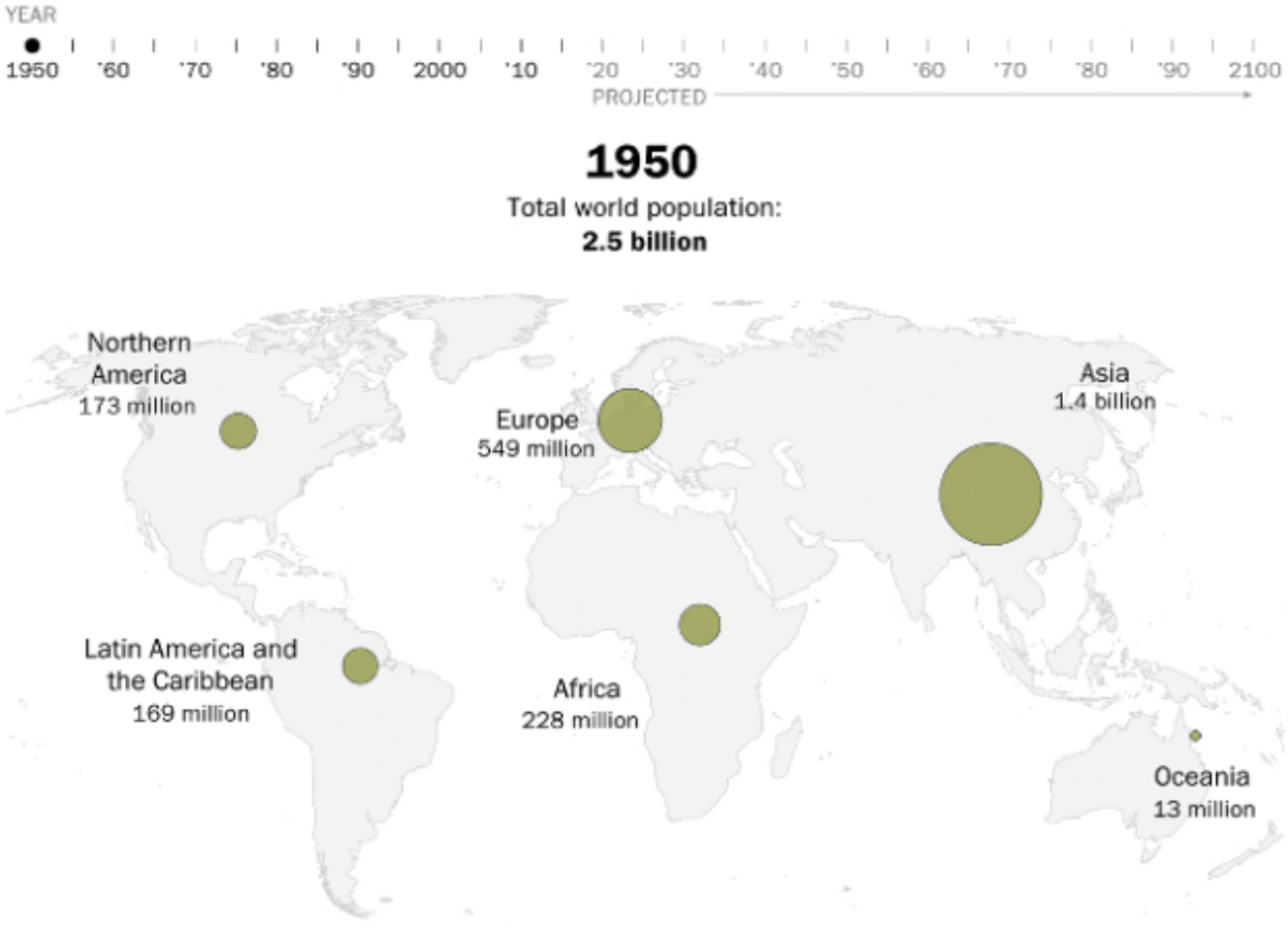
By 2100, Africa's population is projected to be second only to Asia's

Population by region



Note: Regions follow United Nations definitions and may differ from other Pew Research Center reports.
Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2019."

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4 Europe and Latin America are both expected to have declining populations by 2100. Europe's population is projected to peak at 748 million in 2021. The Latin America and Caribbean region is expected to surpass Europe in population by 2037 before peaking at 768 million in 2058.

5 The population of Asia is expected to increase from 4.6 billion in 2020 to 5.3 billion in 2055, then start to decline. China's population is expected to peak in 2031, while the populations of Japan and South Korea are projected to decline after 2020. India's population is expected to grow until 2059, when it will reach 1.7 billion. Meanwhile, Indonesia – the most populous country in Southeastern Asia – is projected to reach its peak population in 2067.

6 In the Northern America region, migration from the rest of the world is expected to be the primary driver of continued population growth. The immigrant population in the United States is expected to see a net increase of 85 million over the next 80 years (2020 to 2100) according to the UN projections, roughly equal to the total of the next nine highest countries combined. In Canada, migration is likely to be a key driver of growth, as Canadian deaths are expected to outnumber births.

7 Six countries are projected to account for more than half of the world's population growth through the end of this century, and five are in Africa. The global population is expected to grow by about 3.1 billion people between 2020 and 2100. More than half of this increase is projected to come from Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Angola, along with one non-African country (Pakistan). Five African countries are projected to be in the world's top 10 countries by population by 2100.

By 2100, five of the world's 10 largest countries are projected to be in Africa

Countries with largest population, in millions

1950		2020		2100	
China	554	China	1,439	India	1,450
India	376	India	1,380	China	1,065
U.S.	159	U.S.	331	Nigeria	733
Russia	103	Indonesia	274	U.S.	434
Japan	83	Pakistan	221	Pakistan	403
Germany	70	Brazil	213	D.R. Congo	362
Indonesia	70	Nigeria	206	Indonesia	321
Brazil	54	Bangladesh	165	Ethiopia	294
UK	51	Russia	146	Tanzania	286
Italy	47	Mexico	129	Egypt	225

Note: Countries are based on current borders. In this data source, China does not include Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan.
Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2019."

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8 India is projected to surpass China as the world's most populous country by 2027. Meanwhile, Nigeria will surpass the U.S. as the third-largest country in the world in 2047, according to the projections.

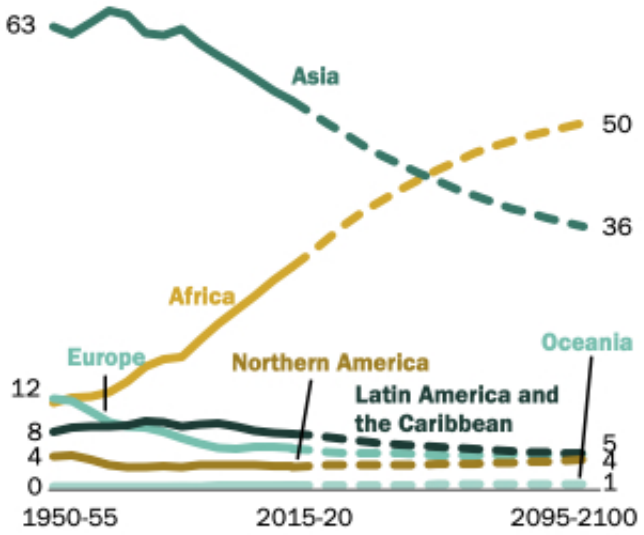
9 Between 2020 and 2100, 90 countries are expected to lose population. Two-thirds of all countries and territories in Europe (32 of 48) are expected to lose population by 2100. In Latin America and the Caribbean, half of the region's 50 countries' populations are expected to shrink. Between 1950 and 2020, by contrast, only six countries in the world lost population, due to much higher fertility rates and a relatively younger population in past decades.

10 Africa is projected to overtake Asia in births by 2060. Half of babies born worldwide are expected to be born in Africa by 2100, up from three-in-ten today. Nigeria is expected to have 864 million births between 2020 and 2100, the most of any African country. The number of births in Nigeria is projected to exceed those in China by 2070.

Meanwhile, roughly a third of the world's babies are projected to be born in Asia by the end of this century, down from about half today and from a peak of 65% in the 1965-70 period.

By 2100, half of babies born worldwide are expected to be born in Africa

% of babies born, by region



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Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2019."

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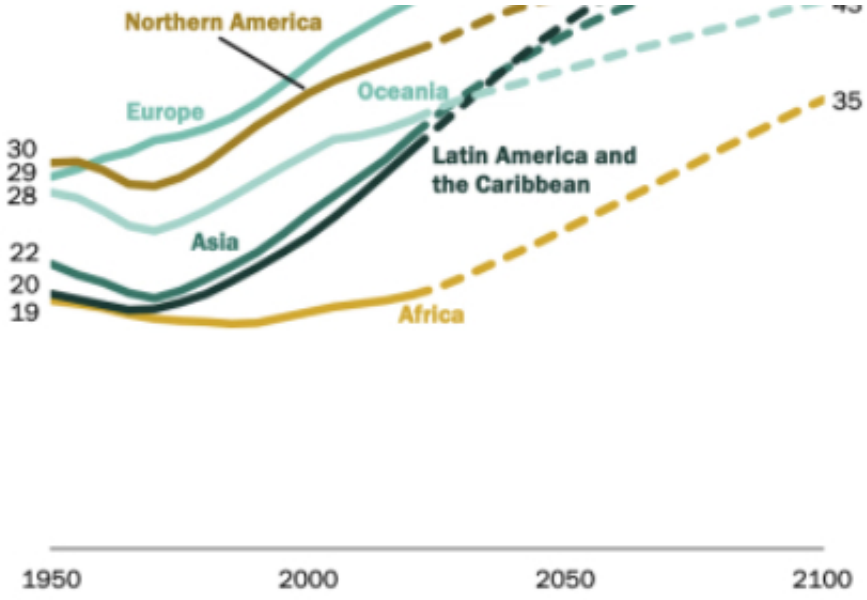
11 The Latin America and Caribbean region is expected to have the oldest population of any world region by 2100, a reversal from the 20th century. In 1950, the region's median age was just 20 years. That figure is projected to more than double to 49 years by 2100.

This pattern is evident when looking at individual countries in the region. For example, in 2020, the median ages of Brazil (33), Argentina (32) and Mexico (29) are all expected to be lower than the median age

Latin America and Caribbean had one of the world's youngest populations in 1950; by 2100, it is expected to have the world's oldest

Median age, by region

in the U.S. (38). However, by 2100, all three of these Latin American nations are projected to be older than the U.S. The median age will be 51 in Brazil, 49 in Mexico and 47 in Argentina, compared with a median age of 45 in the U.S. Colombia is expected to undergo a particularly stark transition, with its median age more than tripling between 1965 and 2100 – from 16 to 52.



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Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects 2019."

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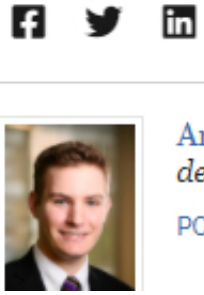
Japan is projected to have the highest median age of any country in the world in 2020, at 48 years old. Japan's median age is expected to continue to rise until it peaks at 55 in 2065. It is expected to be lower in 2100 (54). By that time, the country with the highest median age is expected to be Albania, with a median age of 61.

Correction: This post has been updated to clarify that India is expected to become the world's most populous country by 2027. By 2059, its population is projected to peak at 1.7 billion.

Note: The UN projections for the future population are based on assumptions about likely future changes in key demographic indicators, including fertility, life expectancy and migration. There is uncertainty regarding specific estimates. This analysis uses the medium variant for future dates, which takes the midpoint of likely outcomes. For more information, see the full UN report, data tables and methodology.



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